

Ex 1645
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Evidentiary Document No. 5158.

In the matter of Japanese War crimes and in the matter of the voyage from Singapore to Manila 4th July, to 21st. September, 1944.

A F F I D A V I T

I, No. 153398 Capt. James Forbes LAWRENCE of the Gordon Highlanders, with permanent home address at Arngask Old Manse, Glenfarg, Perthshire, make oath and say as follows:-

1. I was taken prisoner in Singapore on the 15th February, 1942, when the British forces capitulated to the Japanese. Until June, 1942, I was in Changi. I was then moved up to the Siam/Burma railway till December, 1943. I was then sent to Chungkai till the 6th June, 1944. Then down to Havelock Road Camp on Singapore Island previous to being embarked on the 27th June, 1944, on board the Hofuku Maru.

2. The Japanese organised the embarkation and their method was to put one British Officer in charge of 150 men. The Senior British Officer was a Capt. GIBSON. There were 1300 men on board the ship 1100 British and 200 Dutch. There were 13 officers, 10 of these were British and made up of 6 Line Officers and 3 MOs and a Padre. Of the 3 Dutch officers, 2 were Line officers and one MO.

3. The Japanese in charge of the PsW on the ship were Sjt. Jotani and Sgt. MORO. There were 2 interpreters, a 3rd. class Korean Pte. called ARAI and a 1st. class Japanese Pte. called MATSUMOTO. The Japanese officer in charge of the two PW ships which were going to form part of the convoy leaving Singapore was Lt. ENO. He, however, travelled in the other ship.

4. The ship itself, the Hofuku Maru was a cargo ship of 7000 tons. It was Clyde built in 1902 and given to the Japanese in 1918. They reconditioned it and it had been in service ever since. The cargo on this occasion consisted of PsW and rubber. Each PW had to carry aboard when he went a large bit of rubber. All the PsW were quartered in the 2 holds, one forward and one aft. Officers, and men had exactly the same quarters and we were divided between the two holds, about 650 in each. We left on the 4th July, 1944, in a convoy of altogether about 12 ships.

5. During the voyage the PsW were kept below decks in the holds, but the hatches were left open and at odd times parties of men were allowed on deck. Even so this provision was only granted after many requests to Sjt. JOTANI. These groups of men when they were on deck were always the target for JOTANI and the other members of the guard who considered it a sport to

53910N

wade in amongst the PsW with bars of iron and staves and anything else they could get hold of. They used to beat up the PsW unmercifully. Conditions generally in the holds were indescribable. The overcrowding was such that the men could not all lie down at once and groups took it in turns to huddle up in one corner in order to allow some men to stretch out. When a party of men was allowed on deck this eased the pressure below decks and a few men were able to get some sleep. The health of the PsW when they got on board was bad since they had all done about 18 months on the Burma/Siam railway. They were thin, emaciated, half-starved and riddled with diseases such as dysentery, malaria and beri-beri. They were naked except for G-strings, and a few of them had still some tattered tropical uniforms. The atmosphere inside these holds was stifling since the ship was made of iron and was sailing in the tropics. The hygienic arrangements were almost nil. There were no latrine facilities provided in the holds and those who were too weak to move or were half-paralysed with beri-beri excreted where they lay. There were a good many in that condition and the remainder of the people had to sleep and live and eat in these holds. The Japanese had provided 6 box-latrines which were roped to the outside of the ship, 3 for the aft-hold and three for the forward one, but obviously only those men strong enough to climb out of the holds could use these latrines.

6. At the end of July the ship arrived in Manila Bay. We anchored $\frac{1}{2}$ mile from the wharf-side and stayed there for 6 weeks. During this time nobody was allowed on shore. It was only after days of agitation that JOTANI eventually permitted 50 of the worst cases to be taken ashore to the prison hospital in Manila. Of these, I heard later, that 12 had died but so far as I know the remainder are still alive. The rest of us had to stay in the Hofuku Maru. Our meals consisted of watery rice twice a day and any leavings from the Japanese galley. By this time, after the long voyage and due to the lack of food and medical supplies men were beginning to die. In Manila Bay along 104 people died. The doctors and the British officers on board were constantly going at the Japanese to get them to allow some medical supplies on board even if they refused to allow the PsW off the ship. They refused however. However the American authorities in the prison hospital in Manila heard of our plight and got the Japanese to send over to our ship 3 cases of El capsules for injection. JOTANI took these capsules and issued them to the guards on board the ship. Each Japanese had a box of 250 given to him. They they forced our medical officers to give them the injections. Exactly the same thing happened when some multi-vitamin tablets were sent over to us. The PsW got none of these or any other medical supplies whatever. Not content with beating us and starving us JOTANI and NOHO and the guards even broke up funeral services which we tried to hold. JOTANI had given permission for us to hold these, but as soon as they started

he and the other Japanese would wade in with marlin-spikes and anything they could lay their hands on.

7. It would be impossible to exaggerate the effect of JOTANI and NORO on the PsW on board the ship. They and the other guards ruled us by fear. Their savage beatings and assaults on the men who had struggled up on deck, their complete disregard of all those sick and their general attitude and sadistic brutality towards us made life on the Hofuku Maru an absolute hell. It was a miracle to me that only 104 people died.

8. The ship sailed from Manila on the 20th September. The same people were still on board, that is Sjt. JOTANI and the others. We were in a convoy of 10 ships, escorted by two destroyers and two corvettes. There were no distinguishing signs on our ship to show that it contained PsW. It must have appeared from the air or from a submarine as just an ordinary cargo-carrying vessel. We were now kept definitely below decks and only so many at a time were allowed out to go to the latrines.

9. On 21 September at about 1030 we heard machine-gun fire and planes overhead. Everybody was below decks at the time. A few seconds later an aerial torpedo hit the ship forward followed by another between the stern and the bridge and by a third directly below the bridge. Then the American planes began machine-gunning the vessel and there was complete chaos. The Japanese captain and his crew made an instant get-away by jumping overboard immediately. Sjt. JOTANI and Sjt. NORO and the guards did likewise, leaving the PsW to drown. The ship broke in two and sank in 5 minutes. More than half of the PsW were semi-starved and half paralysed and had no chance. For the rest, they were all below decks and there was no method of exit and altogether not far short of 1000 PsW went down with the vessel. I succeeded by a miracle in finding myself in the sea clear of the sinking ship. I hung on to a broken-down bamboo raft and was in the water till 6 that night before being picked up by a lugger. There were quite a number of other British PsW who had also succeeded in escaping from the Hofuku Maru. Our only consolation while we were in the water was watching the American planes sinking every ship in the convoy except one. The survivors, numbering 217 were taken back to Manila on the 22 September.

10. I do not know what happened to JOTANI and NORO but I consider them directly responsible for conditions on board that ship before she went down.

(Signed) J. F. LAWRENCE
SWORN BY the above-named James Forbes LAWRENCE)
at 6 Spring Gardens in the City of Westminster)
this 19th day of February, 1946.)

BEFORE ME

(Signed) A. M. PELL MACDONALD, MAJOR.
Legal Staff,
Judge Advocate General's Office,
LONDON.

Evidentiary Document No. 5158.⁻⁴⁻

CERTIFIED TRUE COPY of the original affidavit.

1st. April, 1946.

(Signed) H. B. LAMB
HQ A.L.F.S.E.A. Lt. Colonel
AAG